

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Discussion of moderated forums for news websites

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This study presents an overview of how community managers, a title encompassing all moderators of online discussion, handle their position in the discussion areas of a news website, whether that is embedded comments connected to stories or on message boards. The primary evidence, gathered through a structured interview, suggests that community managers are spending the majority of their time dealing with spam, off-topic comments, and harmful comments, typically either inappropriate language or personal attacks on other users. The prevalence of community managers as a position was found through the use of a survey to high-ranking members of newspapers across the United States. The survey showed that while most news organizations have sections that allow users to have their voice be heard, many of the sections are not being moderated for content. Many times, comments sections can turn inappropriate if left unchecked. The thesis contains some suggestions that community moderators should consider as they look to develop the most effective, open, and welcoming forum for user-generated content.